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## BRIEF MENTION.

In these times of financial storm and stress magazines, especially technical magazines, have become what the French call 'struggle-for-lifeurs.' Banishment and curtailment of superfluities are indicated everywhere. While I was yet in charge of the Journal, I consulted in my perplexity the oracle of all good Grecians. The response came from the first verse of the slaughter of the suitors (the profiteers of the period) which tells of how the man of counsel stripped him of his rags, αὐτὰρ δ' γυμνὸς ῥακέων πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς. In that verse I read the doom of my Brief Mention rag-bag. But, owing to the intercession of friends, sentence was suspended and the obituary which I had prepared suppressed. But certain sentences of that composition of an historical or haply consolatory character have been deemed worthy of reproduction here.

Like the Romans, the Americans began to dabble in grammar before they had a literature of their own. In English, Lindley Murray, an American, held the lead for a long time. In Greek, Goodwin was the first American Hellenist to win substantial and enduring recognition in what some of us may be permitted to call the mother-country. To this American bent I, too, have yielded and for many years paid tribute to what the wicked might call the national Mumbo-Jumbo. But after decades of ploughing in grammatical furrows and stubbing the waste lands adjacent thereunto, I found myself hankering after the key of fields in which I disported myself in the early years of my long life of endeavour. Despairing of making any considerable additions to literature proper from which future generations might cull what the French call "pages choisies," I began to make up from a mass of manuscripts my own "pages choisies" and to deposit some of them from time to time in the department of the Journal long known as *Brief Mention*. Every now and then I received words of encouragement from personal correspondents and even words of commendation from the public press, but one great lesson of the strait sect in which I was brought up, not to think more highly of myself than I ought to think, has been forced upon me from various quarters. One critic, and that a pupil of my own, passed a damnatory sentence on the whole congeries of observations, which, as a French reviewer said to my great glee, escape analysis. 'Even the simplest *Brief Mention*,' wrote the stern censor, 'will lack meaning for any man unless he is encyclopaedic in his classical knowledge or is keeping close at hand the best glossary possible.' In other

words, *Brief Mention* is a tissue of recondite allusions further hidden by a Babylonish dialect of uncouth words, whereas, personally, I abhor pedantry, and my diction is regulated by a modest range of literary convention. If my critic is right, I must plead guilty to an utter lack of sympathetic imagination. Another censor of more amiable turn reproached me with giving up to *Brief Mention* what was meant for mankind. So to one the "risus ab angulo" sounds cracked; to another, the scant sunshine of this "riant nook" seems clouded by the dust of the schoolroom. 'Ahi, quanta malinconia!' to quote once more Fraccaroli,<sup>1</sup> whose taking off has brought sadness to all Pindaric scholars.

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'A ripping good lecture,' said a distinguished English scholar to me after I had given one of my talks on Aristophanes at Harvard, adding, as if apologizing to himself for a conventional compliment to an American, 'We don't do that sort of thing any more in England.' It seems that I had not been able to avoid a semblance of wit and humour in discoursing on wit and humour in Aristophanes, a proceeding quite out of keeping with the prevalent gravity of English scholarship. I was a relatively old stager before I attracted the attention of British critics, who began by noticing in a sniffy way first my Pindar and then, after an interval, my collection of Essays and Studies. But rebukes direct and implied came too late to affect my equanimity. I have acted on the line which I found afterwards laid down by Flaubert. The only way to do anything really fine is to please one's self. Unfortunately, Flaubert himself was hard to please, and Cicero, vain as he was, expresses an artist's dissatisfaction with his own performances. It is only your Nero that says: *Qualis artifex pereo*. But one remembers St. Augustine and limps along the right path. The criticisms of the English reviewers were levelled at the Americanisms of my language and my attempts, seemingly unsuccessful, at a lighter vein. The Americanisms were all amply warranted by good English usage, and one of the defects was the tendency to indulge in allusions to the great English authors. Then there was the old-fashioned facetiousness.

To be called facetious is of itself a condemnation. Facetiousness belongs in an especial manner to the fashionable physician and the ecclesiastic of high degree. I had no set purpose to be facetious or jocose. And if in the last forty years the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PHILOLOGY has shewn in *Brief Mention* or elsewhere, a proclivity to take a somewhat humorous view of life and letters, it has only manifested a national characteristic

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. J. P. XV 502.

to be expected of an editor who has every right to be considered an American. Nothing is more national than the sense of humour and the manifestation of humour. There are those who think that the nation was born in the throes of the Civil War. Momus is older than Eileithyia (N. 7).

This characteristic of our people is one of the points that help to sustain Mr. Freeman's parallelism of the Sicily of old with the America of to-day. Every one who has read the *Ver-rines* will remember the tribute Cicero, the wit and humorist, paid to the witty and humorous Sicilian. Epicharmos might have been an American. The mime has an American cast: Sophron dyed off on Plato, and the admirers of Plato may recognize something Sicilian in Emerson. "Wherein the Americanism of our lighter vein consists, it is not easy to determine." No critical mind can be satisfied with the once popular resolution into overstatement and understatement, hyperbole and litotes, which are quite too primitive, quite too rudimental. Nor will a study of Mr. Starkie's commentary in his chapter "Aristotle on the Laughter in Comedy" serve to meet the conditions. Whimsicality and quizzicality are characteristic, it is true, but too elusive. Like flavour and scent, national humour defies analysis. What lies beyond the *raison démonstrative* of wit fails to be appreciated by the foreigner. I have recently read an article in which it is asserted that Americans have succeeded in making the Japanese laugh, but Nippon is unresponsive to Mark Twain. As for that matter, Captain Bairnsfather has announced that he intends to import American newspaper men to England in order to teach his countrymen how to appreciate the journalism of America. But nothing seems to rouse the ire of British critics more than the use of what they call journalese in the treatment of grammatical subjects, and for my part, I have for all the years of my travels through the Arabia deserta of Philology delighted in adding to my store of the pawkishnesses of Veitch and the snappishnesses of Lobeck. Immanuel Bekker is a quarry not to be neglected. The most atrabilious critic can hardly repress a smile when Bekker persists in inflecting Meineke as if he were a Greek old woman. But the words of an old song, a song that was old when I was young, come back to me,

Shepherds, I have lost my love,  
Have you seen my Anna?

Pastoral poetry is dead. There are no shepherds left, and my Ana will remain unseen for ever.

But not all English scholars are as obdurate as some of my critics. Two exceptions come up to my mind, one is Rendel Harris, but in his case residence in America may have added a tinge to his native sunshiny humour. The other is his friend,

Hope Moulton, whose treatment of the airy aorist and the impish imperfect brought upon him the severe censure of a reviewer of his *Prolegomena to a Grammar of New Testament Greek* (A. J. P. XXX 107). It seems strange that so joyous a spirit should have had so tragic an exit and that Moulton should have fallen a victim to the ruthless machinery of a German submarine. Of this misadventure Moulton's friend and mine, Rendel Harris, has written an account, unrivalled in vividness by any narrative of shipwreck since the shipwreck recorded in the Acts. From this account, which the writer, characteristically enough, thinks will in time to come be attributed by German critics to a conflation of St. Paul and Synesius, I am permitted to publish an extract describing the end of the gifted and ill-fated scholar:

Moulton was in the next place in the boat, a little further from me, and more exposed to the weather, and with no protection except a piece of tarpaulin which had been erected over his head, and over which the waves were constantly breaking. He had been very busy with the oars and with the baling as long as his strength lasted. I myself tried to row, but was too feeble, and was ordered off. He stuck to it until attacks of sickness stopped him. But up to the last he was doing everything he could for everybody, and won the admiration of all on board. They brought me word on Saturday morning early that he was sinking. I struggled to get to him, but in the few moments' delay he passed away, and before I could get across to him he was gone, and his body was lying on the side of the boat ready for last words and last actions. There was no need for prayers in the case of such as he, so I gave him a kiss of love for myself and for those that were his, and told him that I would care for his little girl, for whom he had been so anxious—and after that, the deep. That was Saturday morning.

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I have somewhere expressed a mild surprise that a scholar such as Leopold Schmidt should have attached so much documentary importance to the apophthegms attributed to Pindar. Compare *Introductory Essay*, p. xiv, of my edition of Pindar.

Apophthegms, anecdotes, repartees, *hoc genus omne* are really *ferae naturae* liable to be caught by any literary game-keeper and assigned to this or that bag according to his good pleasure. Sometimes everything depends upon the assignment, or, to change the figure, upon the setting. A striking illustration of this has recently crossed my track. In my sketch of Bywater, I cited one of his anecdotes as shewing the scholar's relish for caustic humour, A. J. P. XXXVIII 409.

Pio Nono when in conversation with Cardinal Antonelli lit a cigarette and handed the case to the Cardinal, who said, "You know, Holiness, that I have not that vice." "You know, Eminence," replied the Pope, "that if it were a vice, you would have it."

To one who has read of Cardinal Antonelli's private life and is acquainted with Pio Nono's mundane wit, the setting is perfect.

Here is Mr. Russell's version of the story, "Collections and Recollections," p. 186:

A friend of mine in the diplomatic service, visiting Rome in the days of the Temporal Power, had the honour of an interview with Pio Nono. The Pope graciously offered him a cigar, "I am told that you will find them very fine." The Englishman made that stupidest of all answers, "Thanks, your Holiness, but I have no vices." "This isn't a vice; if it was, you would have it."

In comparison with Bywater's rendering, the diplomatist's telling of the story is as clumsy as the imaginary Englishman was stupid; it quite lacks the Italian finesse, and lacks the air of authenticity.

B. L. GILDERSLEEVE.

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### EDWIN WHITFIELD FAY

1865-1920

It is the sad duty of the Journal to record the recent death of one of its most frequent and valued contributors, EDWIN WHITFIELD FAY, Professor of Latin in the University of Texas. Called to the bedside of his sister in Pittsburgh, who was ill with pneumonia, he himself fell a victim to that disease, which carried him off on February 17. As a man, EDWIN WHITFIELD FAY was an honor to the community that was fortunate enough to possess him; as a teacher, he held a firm place in the esteem and affection of those who were privileged to be his pupils; as a scholar, he stood in the front rank of American men of learning, and achieved international distinction.

C. W. E. MILLER.

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